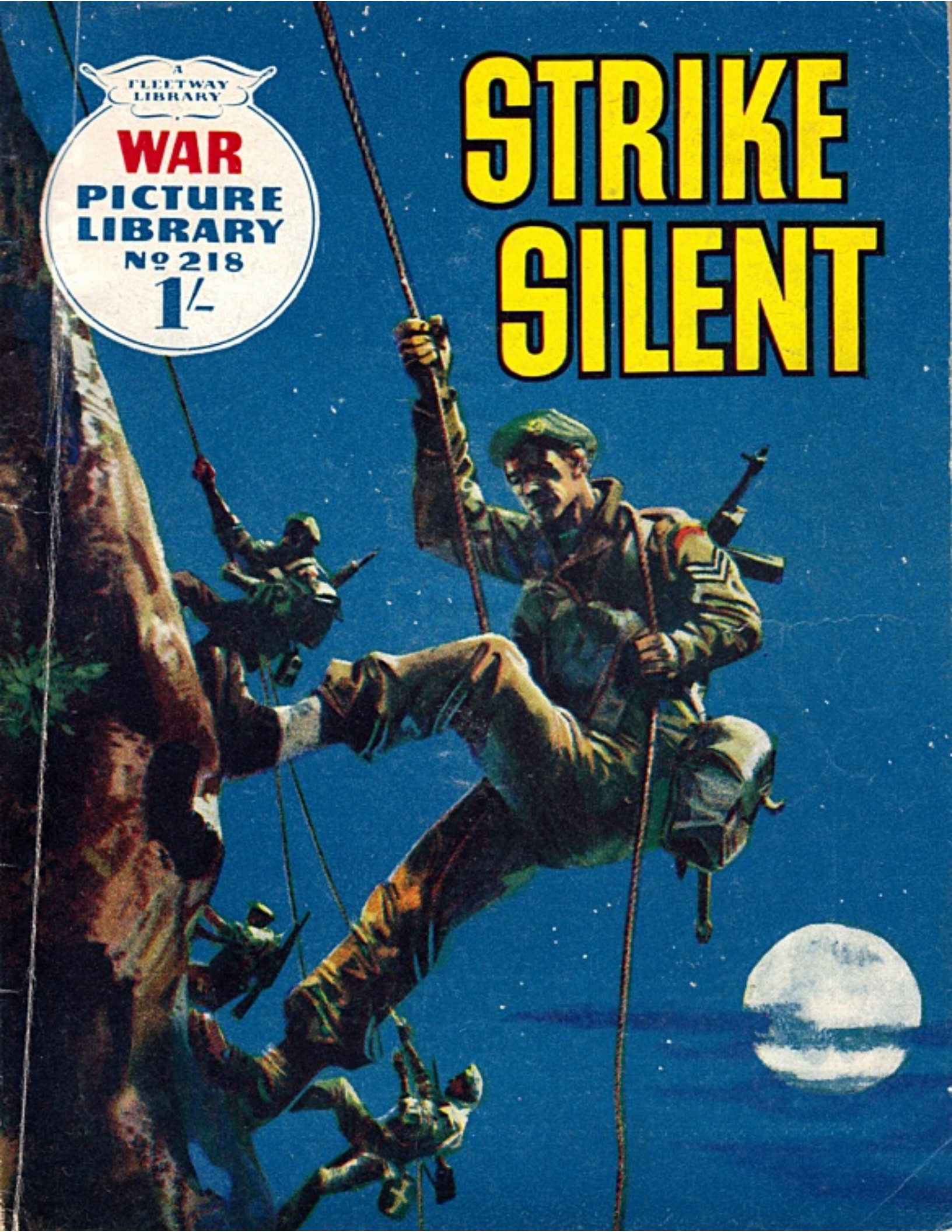




# STRIKE SILENT





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# STRIKE SILENT

FOR ONE MAN, WAR CAN BE AN EXCITING CHALLENGE. FOR ANOTHER, IT CAN BE A MIND-WHIRLING TERROR. BUT EVEN THE COWARD, WHEN HIS HONOUR IS AT STAKE, CAN BE WILLING TO PAY THE SAVAGE PRICE...





# Chapter 1. The Steel Trap

WHEN GEORGE BRAND DIED HE BEQUEATHED HIS BROAD ACRES TO HIS TWO SONS, MARTIN AND NOEL. MARTIN, THE ELDER SON, CARRIED THE LOVE OF THE SOIL IN HIS BLOOD BUT NOEL WAS BORED AND RESTLESS.. ONE DAY THINGS CAME TO A HEAD...



LET'S TALK SENSE, NOEL. YOUR LIVING IS HERE. IF YOU WALK OUT WHERE WILL YOU GO?

THIS FARMING GAME GIVES ME A PAIN. IF IT WASN'T FOR THE ODD NIGHT OUT AT MARKET GOBIUN I'D GO CRACKERS! BROTHER, YOU CAN HAVE IT!

NOEL BRAND WAS A MISFIT ON THE FARM. MARTIN KNEW THAT, BUT HE HAD ALWAYS HOPED HIS WAYWARD BROTHER WOULD DEVELOP A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY TO HIS INHERITANCE.

THAT'S SOON FIXED. I COULD SELL MY SHARE OF THE FARM...

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. WE PROMISED DAD WE'D NEVER BREAK UP THE FARM. IF YOU NEED MONEY YOU'VE GOT TO WORK OUT SOMETHING ELSE!





A GLINT OF ANGER SPRANG INTO NOEL'S EYES...



ALWAYS DAD'S GOLDEN-HAIRED BOY, WEREN'T YOU? ALL THE SAME, HALF THIS PLACE IS MINE BY LAW. I WANT IT... IN CASH!

YOU WON'T GET IT. IF YOU TAKE IT TO COURT I'LL FIGHT YOU ALL THE WAY! I MEAN THAT, NOEL!

ALL THE STORED-UP RESENTMENT AND FRUSTRATION OF THE PAST YEAR FLARED UP IN THE YOUNGER MAN AS HE TURNED ON HIS BROTHER.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING. IF YOU WAIT LONG ENOUGH I'LL WALK OUT AND LEAVE YOU THE LOT. WELL, YOU'RE MISTAKEN! IF I DON'T GET THAT MONEY, I'LL...



PUT THAT WRENCH DOWN. I'M WARNING YOU, NOEL.

THERE WAS A COLD FINALITY IN MARTIN'S VOICE. TAMELY, NOEL DROPPED HIS ARM...

WE'VE GOT WORK TO DO. WHEN YOU COME TO ME WITH A SENSIBLE PROPOSITION I'LL LISTEN. BUT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BREAK UP THE FARM!





FOR TWO DAYS THE BROTHERS WENT ABOUT THE FARM IN A COLD SILENCE. THEN, ON FRIDAY, MARTIN DROVE INTO THE NEARBY MARKET TOWN TO BUY STOCK...

MARTIN BRAND? DO YOU THINK I COULD HAVE A WORD WITH YOU - IN PRIVATE.

OKAY, CHUM - BUT WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?



MARTIN WAS SOON TO LEARN.

I'M A BOOKMAKER, MISTER BRAND. YOUR BROTHER RUNS QUITE AN ACCOUNT WITH ME. HE'S BEEN FALLING BEHIND LATELY AND WHEN I PRESSED HIM FOR PAYMENT HE GAVE ME THIS CHEQUE FOR FOUR HUNDRED POUNDS.

FOUR HUNDRED! BUT THIS CHEQUE'S SIGNED IN MY NAME. IT'S A FORGERY!





THE MAN'S WORDS STRUCK MARTIN LIKE A BLOW. HE HAD ALWAYS KNOWN HIS BROTHER WAS RASH AND IMPULSIVE, BUT THIS NEW REVELATION OF HIS CHARACTER HURT HIM DEEPLY.

EXACTLY. AND HE STILL OWES ME FOUR HUNDRED QUID. IF I DON'T GET IT IN THREE DAYS I TAKE THIS TO THE POLICE.

I'LL—I'LL SEE YOU GET YOUR MONEY.

WHEN NOEL RETURNED FROM THE VILLAGE THAT NIGHT, HE FOUND MARTIN WAITING FOR HIM. THE TRUTH WAS OUT...

SO WHAT? I WAS FLAT BROKE. HE WAS PUTTING PRESSURE ON ME. TAKE IT OUT OF MY SHARE OF THE FARM.

I'VE DONE THAT, NOEL. THAT LEAVES YOU A SUM OF FOURTEEN HUNDRED POUNDS. IT'S HERE IN THE ENVELOPE.

MARTIN'S VOICE WAS EDGED WITH BITTERNESS AS HE WENT ON...

I RAISED A LOAN AT THE BANK TODAY. I HAD TO MORTGAGE THE FARM TO DO IT. THAT'S YOUR SHARE. FIRST THING TOMORROW YOU'LL LEAVE THIS PLACE AND NEVER COME BACK!



# Strike Silent

IF MARTIN EXPECTED HIS BROTHER TO BE SURPRISED HE WAS DISAPPOINTED. THE PROSPECT OF THE MONEY APPEALED TO HIS PLEASURE-LOVING SOUL.

WITH PLEASURE, DEAR BROTHER. YOU WON'T SEE *ME* AGAIN. I'VE A NOTION TO GO ABROAD — MAYBE PARIS.

I DON'T CARE WHERE YOU GO — AS LONG AS YOU DON'T COME BACK HERE!

THAT NIGHT MARTIN SLEPT FITFULLY, AND WHEN HE AWOKE IT WAS TO SEE THE ROOM BATHED IN A SULLEN RED GLARE. OUTSIDE, HE HEARD THE CRACKLING OF BLAZING TIMBER. HE RAN TO THE WINDOW...

THE BARN AND OUT-BUILDINGS! HOW DID IT HAPPEN? SURELY, NOEL DIDN'T...

HURRIEDLY HE DRESSED AND SEARCHED THE HOUSE. BUT NOEL'S ROOM WAS EMPTY. HIS CAR HAD GONE. HE HAD TAKEN HIS LAST OUNCE OF FLESH.

I CALLED THE BRIGADE, MISTER BRAND, BUT I THINK IT'S TOO LATE. ALL THAT EQUIPMENT GONE UP TOO. I WONDER WHO COULD HAVE DONE SUCH A THING?

HE'S EVEN TAKEN THE MEN'S WAGES! ALL RIGHT, NOEL, YOU WIN! YOU'VE RUINED ME!

MARTIN CAUGHT THE SUSPICION IN THE FARMHAND'S VOICE BUT LOYALTY TO HIS BROTHER FORCED HIM TO HIS DEFENCE.

I WONDER HOW IT STARTED. I'LL GAMBLE IT WEREN'T AN ACCIDENT. MAYBE SOMEBODY WITH A GRUDGE AGAINST YE...

WE'LL NEVER KNOW THE TRUTH, BEN. AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO GOSSIP ABOUT IT. IT'S OVER AND DONE WITH NOW.



BUT MARTIN BRAND WAS SOON TO HAVE OTHER PROBLEMS THAN THOSE ABOUT HIS WAYWARD BROTHER. ACROSS THE CHANNEL A MAD GAMBLER, PLAYING FOR STAKES THAT WERE TO SHAKE THE WORLD, CONFERRED WITH HIS GENERALS.



THESE POLISH BEASTS — THEY MUST BE TAUGHT A LESSON THAT WILL STICK FOR A THOUSAND YEARS! MY PATIENCE IS EXHAUSTED! WE MARCH...

THE PANZERS CRASHED THROUGH POLAND, AND ENGLAND WAS AT WAR. THE TENTACLES REACHED OUT TO A DEBT-RIDDEN LITTLE FARM IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. MARTIN MADE HIS DECISION...

YOU'LL LOOK AFTER THE FARM, BEN. THE BANK PEOPLE HAVE AGREED TO LET YOU CARRY ON FOR THE DURATION. MAYBE, WHEN THE WAR'S OVER...

DON'T YOU FRET, MASTER. I KNOW WHY YOU'RE GOING. DID THE SAME MYSELF IN NINETEEN-FOURTEEN.

MARTIN DID WELL IN THE ARMY. THE BIG-BONED YOUNG FARMER, TOUGHENED AND DISCIPLINED BY WORK AND WEATHER, TOOK READILY TO ARMY ROUTINE. HIS NATIVE INTELLIGENCE DID THE REST.

SO THEY HUNG SOME STRIPES ON YOU, MARTY, BOY. THERE'LL BE HIGH JINKS ON THE OLD FARM TONIGHT. DO WE CELEBRATE IN TOWN TONIGHT?

YOU BET. HOW FAR WILL TEN BOB GO AMONG YOU LOT?

HE CROSSED OVER TO FRANCE WITH THE B.E.F. AND SETTLED DOWN TO THE SLOW BUILD-UP IN PREPARATION FOR BATTLE.

NO WONDER THEY CALL IT THE BORE WAR. NOTHING EVER HAPPENS. I RECKON THAT MAGINOT LINE'S GOT THE PANTS SCARED OFF OLD HITLER.

IT'LL COME IN THE SPRING, JOE. WE FARMERS ALWAYS SAY THAT. EVERYTHING GETS MOVING IN THE SPRING.

SPRING CAME ROUND AND THE NAZI WAR MACHINE SMASHED INTO FRANCE. THE PANZERS TURNED THE MAGINOT LINE THEN WHEELED IN A PINCER MOVEMENT BEHIND THE BRITISH. AN ARMY WAS CAUGHT IN A STEEL TRAP.

HEAR THAT, CORP? JERRY'S RIGHT BEHIND US WITH ALL HIS ARMOUR! WHAT A TAKE-IN! THAT BLOKE'S GOT MORE SAVVY THAN ALL OUR GENERALS PUT TOGETHER!

SUPPOSE WE WAIT AND SEE.



THEY FOUGHT THEIR WAY TO THE BEACHES OF DUNKIRK. DAZED WITH FATIGUE, HAMMERED BY THE STUKA'S, THE DISCIPLINED RANKS WAITED FOR THE ARMADA OF LITTLE SHIPS THAT SAILED FROM ENGLAND TO PLUCK THEM FROM THE VERY JAWS OF DEATH...



THEY STUMBLED ASHORE IN ENGLAND, GAUNT, UNSHAVEN, SHAMED BY DEFEAT—BURNING WITH A SLOW ANGER THAT WAS TO EXPLODE ACROSS FRANCE FOUR YEARS HENCE...



BUT ONE ENGLISHMAN, AT LEAST, WAS STILL ON FRENCH SOIL. NOEL BRAND TURNED AS HIS WIFE SWUNG ROUND FROM THE RADIO...





## Strike Silent

IN A FEW MONTHS NOEL BRAND HAD SQUANDERED HIS MONEY IN PARIS AND THEN HE HAD BEEN BEFRIENDED BY HELOISE DULOCQ AND HAD MARRIED HER.



THE GENDARME WHO CHECKED NOEL'S PAPERS WATCHED THE ENGLISHMAN CURIOUSLY.



BUT NOEL BRAND HAD NO SUCH INTENTION. IN HIS EYES, THE WAR WAS LOST AND ALL THAT REMAINED WAS TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE CONQUEROR. HELOISE KNEW THAT TOO.

WHY DID YOU LIE, NOEL? YOU ARE NOT THE KIND THAT FIGHTS BACK.

I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING. ENGLAND IS FINISHED! SO IS FRANCE!

IN THE FEW WEEKS HELOISE DULOCCQ HAD KNOWN HER HUSBAND SHE HAD PLUMBED THE SHALLOWS OF HIS CHARACTER.

NO, FRANCE IS NOT FINISHED! WE ARE PEASANTS AND WE KNOW HOW TO FIGHT. MY FATHER WILL CARRY ON THE BATTLE IN BRITTANY. LET ME ADVISE YOU, NOEL. NEVER TALK OF DEFEAT TO MY FATHER.





## Chapter 2. *Fight Back*

WHILE FRANCE LAY UNDER THE HEEL OF THE NAZIS, THE BRITISH ARMY BEGAN THE SLOW PROCESS OF REBUILDING AND REARMING TO BATTLE STRENGTH. ONE DAY A VISITOR ARRIVED AT THE CAMP WHERE MARTIN BRAND WAS STATIONED...

I'LL GET STRAIGHT TO THE POINT. A NEW UNIT IS BEING FORMED UNDER THE NAME OF COMMANDO. WE ARE LOOKING FOR TOUGH, SEASONED MEN WHO ARE PREPARED TO UNDER-

TAKE RATHER DANGEROUS MISSIONS.



SOMEHOW, THE SPEAKER, WITH HIS CLIPPED VOICE AND DECEPTIVELY CASUAL MANNER, FIRED BRAND'S IMAGINATION.

IT WILL INVOLVE A HARD TRAINING SESSION TO WEED OUT THE WEAKLINGS. DON'T MISTAKE ME, CHAPS. IT'LL BE TOUGH! IT HAS TO BE.

MIGHT BE WORTH TRYING. AT LEAST I'D BE GETTING A CRACK AT SOMEBODY!



BRAND VOLUNTEERED AND WAS ACCEPTED. A MONTH LATER HE WAS TRANSFERRED TO A COMMANDO TRAINING UNIT-AND GOT HIS FIRST TASTE OF WHAT THAT REALLY MEANT.

NOW YOU LOT ARE GOING TO SCALE THAT CLIFF - FIRST BY DAYLIGHT, THEN AT NIGHT. USE YOUR FEET LIKE I TOLD YOU AND YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT.

WHAT'S HE TAKE US FOR? FLIES?

THE COURSE WENT ON, TESTING EACH MAN TO BREAKING POINT, SEARCHING OUT THE HIDDEN FLAWS IN HIS DETERMINATION AND COURAGE.

I COULD HAVE BROKEN YOUR NECK THAT TIME, BRAND, BUT I HATE DEAD SOLDIERS MESSING UP THE PLACE! NOW TRY AGAIN. AND THIS TIME DON'T HESITATE AS YOU COME IN. THAT'S BAD!





MARTIN BRAND TOOK TO THE VIOLENT ART OF MODERN WARFARE QUICKLY AND WELL.



THE COMMANDOS HAD TO LEARN THE HABIT OF IMPLICIT OBEDIENCE TO ORDERS, REHEARSING FOR THE DAY WHEN THE BATTLE WOULD BE IN EARNEST AND A MAN WHO IGNORED ORDERS WAS A DEAD MAN.



TWO MEN DREW BACK INVOLUNTARILY. THEY WOULD BE MARKED DOWN AS FAILURES.



THE SERGEANT LINED THEM UP ON THE BEACH, THEIR TEETH CHATTERING FROM THE ICY SEA.

NOW WE'LL START OUR ROUTE MARCH AS PLANNED. DON'T WORRY, YOUR CLOTHES WILL DRY ON YOU. REMEMBER, COMMANDOS *NEVER* CATCH PNEUMONIA. THAT'S FOR COMMON SOLDIERS!



BRAND PASSED THE COURSE SUCCESSFULLY. HE HAD GONE INTO IT A TOUGH, SEASONED SOLDIER. HE CAME OUT OF IT A COMMANDO.

WE'VE TRIED TO TEACH YOU THE LESSONS OF SURVIVAL UNDER ADVERSE CONDITIONS. ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU ARE FIGHTING A POWERFUL ENEMY, SUPERBLY ARMED AND DISCIPLINED. BUT NEVER FORGET THAT FOR ALL THAT, HE *WILL* BE BEATEN!





ENGLAND WAS PROFITING FROM THE DISASTER OF DUNKIRK. WHILE HER ARMIES MADE PREPARATIONS FOR THE COUNTER-BLOW, THE COMMANDOS HAD TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE.



MEANWHILE THE INTELLIGENCE SECTION AT G.H.Q. IN LONDON WERE STUDYING A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY AN AIR RECONNAISSANCE UNIT TWO DAYS PREVIOUSLY.

LOOKS LIKE SOME FORM OF APPARATUS TO GIVE EARLY WARNING OF OUR BOMBERS APPROACHING. WE LOST THREE IN THAT AREA LAST WEEK, REMEMBER?



THAT'S FOR GENERAL STAFF TO DECIDE. MAYBE A NIGHT RAID BY PICKED MEN TO CHECK ON IT—OR EVEN BRING PART OF IT AWAY FOR EXAMINATION BY OUR BACK-ROOM MEN!




"A NIGHT RAID BY PICKED MEN". IT WAS MADE TO ORDER FOR THE COMMANDOS. THE DECISION WAS TAKEN AND PLANS DRAWN UP.



WHAT ABOUT THE  
LOCAL RESISTANCE? CAN  
THEY HELP US?

AFRAID NOT, SIR.  
WE HAVEN'T MADE  
EFFECTIVE CONTACT YET.  
WE DROPPED TWO AGENTS  
OVER THERE A WEEK AGO,  
BUT SO FAR WE'VE HEARD  
NOTHING.

TWO NIGHTS LATER A UNIT OF COMMANDOS,  
MARTIN BRAND AMONG THEM, STEPPED  
ASHORE FROM THEIR RUBBER DINGHIES AND  
GATHERED BELOW THE TOWERING CLIFFS OF  
THE BRITTANY COAST.



OUR OBJECTIVE'S  
HALF A MILE WEST OF  
HERE, BUT THIS IS THE  
ONLY PART WE CAN  
SCALE. I'LL GO UP  
FIRST WITH THE ROPES.



PRESENTLY THEY HEARD THE SOFT SWISH OF THE FALLING ROPES AND STARTED TO MOUNT TO THE CLIFF-TOP, MOVING WITH THE STEALTH OF LONG PRACTICE.



THIS WAS THE CULMINATION OF MONTHS OF TRAINING UNDER FEROCIOUS CONDITIONS — THE FIRST VENTURE INTO ENEMY-OCCUPIED TERRITORY...

WE'LL LOB A FEW GRENADES INTO THE GUARDHOUSE TO KEEP THEM BUSY WHILE THE REST OF YOU MAKE A DASH FOR THE SCANNER. TURNER IS THE TECHNICIAN. HE'LL TELL YOU WHAT PARTS TO TAKE.



CAPTAIN DEEMING AND TWO OTHERS  
SLID AWAY INTO THE DARKNESS.  
THEN THE NIGHT ERUPTED IN FLAME  
AND SOUND.

THERE IT  
GOES. LET'S  
HAVE SOME  
ACTION, BOYS.  
THIS IS IT!



MARTIN BRAND FOUND  
HIMSELF RUNNING AT TOP  
SPEED IN A MAD CONFUSION  
OF FLAME AND STARTLED  
CRIES.





SUDDENLY A SEARCHLIGHT BEAM SWEEPED THE SITE, STOPPED AND FOCUSED - PINNING THE RAIDERS IN A CONE OF EYE-SEARING LIGHT.



AND THEN A CROSSFIRE FROM MACHINE GUNS IN CUNNINGLY CONCEALED BUNKERS RIPPED AND SLASHED INTO THEM.



CAPTAIN DEEMING SAW HIS MEN FALL IN THAT HAIL OF BULLETS, AND MADE THE ONLY DECISION HE COULD...



BACK TO THE BEACH! MISSION OFF! GET BACK!

AS THEY RACED FROM THE SIGHT, BRAND SAW DEEMING DROP AND HALF-TURNED TO GO TO HIS AID. THEN HE RECALLED THE LESSON OF OBEDIENCE TO ORDERS.



THE CAPTAIN'S HIT, MARTY. THERE'S A CHANCE WE COULD...

YOU HEARD THE ORDERS, HUGHIE! KEEP GOING!

THE RAID HAD FAILED, CUT DOWN ALMOST TO EXTINCTION. ONLY THREE SURVIVORS PADDOLED OUT TO THE WAITING ESCORT VESSEL.



THREE OF US LEFT! DEEMING-TAFFY-JOE BRENNAN-TURNER-ALL GONE! WHAT THE HECK WENT WRONG?

SHUT UP, HUGHIE! JUST DON'T TALK!



THEY REACHED BASE BEFORE DAWN, SHOCKED AND DAZED, ACHING WITH THE BITTERNESS OF DEFEAT AND THE MEMORY OF COMRADES DYING ON A CLIFF-TOP.



BETTER LUCK  
NEXT TIME, LADS.  
THE OLD MAN WANTS  
A FULL REPORT FROM  
YOU WHEN YOU'VE  
EATEN, BRAND.

OKAY,  
SARGE.  
BUT TAKE  
THE GRUB  
AWAY.

MARTIN BRAND'S REPORT WENT BACK TO GENERAL STAFF H.Q. IN LONDON.



WE'VE SHOWN OUR HAND  
AND NOW THEY KNOW JUST  
WHAT WE'RE AFTER. INSIDE  
A MONTH THAT PLACE WILL BE  
A CONCRETE FORTRESS.

WHAT WE NEEDED  
WAS HELP FROM THE  
FRENCH RESISTANCE  
THERE, SIR. THEY COULD  
HAVE TOLD US ABOUT  
THE DEFENCES.

## Strike Silent



THEN THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER DROPPED A BOMBSHELL RIGHT INTO THE LAPS OF THE CONFERENCE.





MEANWHILE, IN A LITTLE SCHOOLHOUSE AT BRIER, PERE DULOCQ, SCHOOLTEACHER, WAS DISMISSING HIS CLASS FOR THE DAY.

THAT WILL BE ALL, MES ENFANTS. SEE THAT YOU HAVE YOUR HOMEWORK READY TOMORROW MORNING.



BUT THE BENEVOLENT SMILE OF OLD PERE DULOCQ MASKED A RAZOR-KEEN BRAIN. FOR HE WAS THE ORGANISING MASTERMIND OF THE LOCAL UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT.



I TALKED TO THE 'ROCK' THIS MORNING. HE SAYS THE BRITISH MADE A RAID LAST NIGHT. THEY LOST NINE MEN AND WERE DRIVEN OFF. THE BOCHES ARE CELEBRATING.

SO? TELL THE 'ROCK'. I WILL SEE HIM TONIGHT.

HELOISE AND NOEL BRAND HAD GONE TO LIVE WITH HER FATHER IN BRIER. BUT THE SHREWD OLD MAN HAD ALREADY FOUND THE FLAWS IN THE ENGLISHMAN'S CHARACTER.



WITH THE PASSAGE OF MONTHS AMONG STRANGERS IN A LAND OCCUPIED BY ENEMIES, NOEL HAD TURNED INTO A BROODING, MOROSE MAN.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU PEOPLE? NOBODY HERE TRUSTS ME—NOT EVEN YOUR FATHER! WHAT HAVE I DONE TO THEM?



BUT HELOISE KNEW HER MAN ONLY TOO WELL. HER AFFECTION FOR HIM HAD TURNED TO CONTEMPT, EVEN THOUGH SHE CLUNG TO HIM OUT OF LOYALTY.

THESE DARNED FROGGIES! THEY TREAT ME AS IF I WERE A COLLABORATOR!





THAT NIGHT, PERE DULOCQ MADE A SECRET RENDEZVOUS WITH HIS LIEUTENANT, JEAN ROQUETON, KNOWN AS THE ROCK. A RESOLUTE FIGHTER, AND AN IMPLACABLE ENEMY OF THE GERMANS.



YOU HEARD THE NEWS? IT IS BAD! THE BRITISH SHOULD HAVE TALKED WITH US FIRST.

I HAVE NEWS TOO, JEAN. BUT WAIT—WHO IS THIS MAN? I HAVE NEVER SEEN HIM BEFORE.

THE ROCK SNORTED IMPATIENTLY. HE HAD NOT THE SUBTLE, SCHEMING BRAIN OF DULOCQ. HE WAS ESSENTIALLY A MAN OF ACTION.



YOU WOULD SUSPECT YOUR OWN MOTHER! MORAND, HE IS SAFE ENOUGH. YOU CAN TRUST HIM. THE GESTAPO HAVE HIS TWO BROTHERS. WOULD SUCH A MAN BETRAY US?

DULOCQ IGNORED THE TINY WARNING FLICKER THAT SHOT THROUGH HIS BRAIN AND WENT ON...



A BRITISH AGENT FROM LE HAVRE MOVES IN TONIGHT. WE MEET HIM AN HOUR BEFORE DAWN AT THE BARRIQUER CROSSROADS. GREAT THINGS ARE IN THE AIR, JEAN.

GOOD! I'LL BE THERE!

AT MIDNIGHT THAT SAME NIGHT, SEIDLER, THE LOCAL GESTAPO CHIEF, WAS ENTERTAINING THE GERMAN TROOP COMMANDANT IN THE MANOR HE HAD TAKEN OVER FOR HIS HEADQUARTERS.





## Strike Silent

SEIDLER'S AIDE MOVED TO THE DOOR OF THE ROOM AND OPENED IT. A SMALL WISP OF A MAN ENTERED.

MORAND HERE, IS WORKING FOR US, TO ENSURE THE WELFARE OF HIS TWO BROTHERS YOU UNDERSTAND? NOW TELL US WHAT YOU HEARD TONIGHT, MY FRIEND.

I WILL TELL YOU, M'SIEUR.

WHEN MORAND HAD FINISHED, THE GESTAPO OFFICER DISMISSED HIM LIGHTLY.

I HAVE BETRAYED MY PEOPLE AND MURDERED MY SOUL, M'SIEUR. NOW WILL YOU HONOUR YOUR WORD TO ME? YOU WILL SET MY BROTHERS FREE?

THEY WILL BE RELEASED IN DUE COURSE. NOW LEAVE US.

WHO DOES HE THINK WE ARE, THAT ONE? I HAD THEM SHOT THIS MORNING. NOW TO BUSINESS. IT APPEARS THAT DULOCQ AND ROQUETON ARE THE LOCAL LEADERS. WE SHALL BE THERE AT THE BARRIQUER CROSSROADS THIS MORNING TO MEET THEM, HERR OBERLEUTNANT!



AN HOUR BEFORE DAWN, PERE DULOCQ AND THE ROCK WAITED BESIDE THE LONELY BARRIQUER CROSSROADS.

IT'S LATE, ANTON. THIS ENGLISHMAN—YOU THINK HE WILL COME?

HE WILL COME. THE BRITISH DON'T MAKE IDLE PROMISES.



THEN AN ANCIENT TRUCK CLANKED PAST THEM, STOPPED FOR A MOMENT AND THEN DROVE ON. A TALL LITHE FIGURE WALKED TOWARDS THEM...

GOOD MORNING, MES AMIS. IN PROVENCE THEY SAY THERE IS FROST ON THE VINES.

THAT MAY BE TRUE, M'SIEUR, BUT WE SHALL NOT WANT FOR GOOD WINE.





## Strike Silent

ONCE THE PREARRANGED, IDENTIFICATION GREETING HAD BEEN EXCHANGED, CAPTAIN FOSTER WASTED NO TIME.

YOU KNOW WHY I AM HERE. BY TONIGHT, OUR INTELLIGENCE PEOPLE WANT FULL DETAILS OF THE GERMAN DEFENCES IN THIS AREA. IT IS URGENT!

ALL THAT HAS BEEN ATTENDED TO, M'SIEUR. DEFENCE-POINTS, WEAPONS, DISPOSITION OF MEN-WE HAVE THEM ALL. YOU WILL LODGE AT THE FARM OF ROQUETON HERE.

A NOISE BEHIND THEM SPUN THE THREE MEN ROUND. A VOICE RASPED IN THE DARKNESS...

STAY WHERE YOU ARE! ANY MAN WHO MOVES WILL BE SHOT!

SEIDLER! WE'VE BEEN BETRAYED! RUN, MY FRIENDS! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!

SWIFT-FOOTED AS A CAT FOR ALL HIS TREMENDOUS BULK, THE ROCK CHARGED THROUGH THE CORDON, CLEAVING A PATH WITH HIS BULL-LIKE SHOULDERS AND GREAT FISTS.



AT THE SAME TIME, THE BRITISH AGENT MADE HIS BID FOR ESCAPE. BUT HE WAS NOT FAST ENOUGH...





SEIDLER STUDIED THE FACE OF THE DEAD BRITISH AGENT, HIS BRAIN WORKING WITH THE MERCILESS CLUNNING OF A WOLF STALKING A DEER.

ONE OF THEM GOT AWAY, HERR SEIDLER. HE IS A MONSTER. HE KILLED ONE OF MY MEN WITH HIS BARE FIST!

WE STILL HAVE DULOCC. CORDON OFF THE AREA TO FIND ROQUETON, THEN BRING DULOCC AND HIS FAMILY TO MY HEADQUARTERS FOR INTERROGATION!

THE GESTAPO MOVED WITH BRUTAL SPEED...

WE KNOW ALL WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOU, DULOCC, AND WE'LL SOON PICK UP ROQUETON. WE ALSO KNOW WHY THAT BRITISH AGENT CAME HERE.

WHO BETRAYED US, M'SIEUR? WAS IT MORAND?

BUT SEIDLER DID NOT ANSWER. HE WAS WATCHING NOEL BRAND, STRUCK BY THE STRONG FACIAL RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN HIM AND THE DEAD BRITISH AGENT. AT LAST HE RAPPED OUT AN ORDER...

LEAVE THIS MAN ALONE WITH ME AND TAKE THE OTHERS AWAY.

ALREADY A SCHEME OF DIABOLICAL CUNNING WAS TAKING SHAPE IN THE GESTAPO CHIEF'S FERTILE BRAIN.




ACCUSTOMED TO DEALING WITH MEN OF ALL TYPES FROM HERO TO COWARD, SEIDLER HAD MEASURED BRAND SHREWDLY AND EXPERTLY.

THEN YOU CAN SAVE HER AND YOURSELF. DO WHAT I SAY AND I'LL RELEASE YOU BOTH - EVEN IF THE OLD MAN HAS TO FACE THE FIRING-SQUAD.








YOU WILL IMPERSONATE THE BRITISH AGENT, FOSTER. WE KNOW HE WAS SENT HERE TO COLLECT INFORMATION ABOUT OUR POSITIONS FROM THE RESISTANCE AND PASS THEM ON TO A BRITISH RECONNAISSANCE PARTY TONIGHT. YOU WILL KEEP THE RENDEZVOUS, BUT WITH MAPS PREPARED BY US!

NOEL BRAND YIELDED WITHOUT A STRUGGLE.



ALL RIGHT, I—I'LL DO IT.

GOOD. YOUR WIFE AND THE OLD MAN WILL BE KEPT HERE IN BRIER, TILL YOU COMPLETE THE JOB. THEN SHE GOES FREE ALONG WITH YOU.

# Chapter 3. Landing Party

THAT MORNING, USING THE CODE BETRAYED TO THEM BY MORAND, THE GERMANS SENT A RADIO MESSAGE TO THE BRITISH INTELLIGENCE.



THE HUNTING HERE IS GOOD. TODAY WE TRAPPED FOUR HARES AND THREE RABBITS. THE FOOD POSITION SHOULD IMPROVE WITH THE HARVEST. ARMAND SENDS HIS BEST WISHES.

BACK IN ENGLAND, THE MESSAGE WAS RECEIVED AT INTELLIGENCE H.Q. AND SWIFTLY DECODED.

EXCELLENT! FOSTER MADE CONTACT AND HAS THE INFORMATION. HE'LL MEET OUR RECCE LANDING PARTY AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT, BELOW THE CLIFFS SOUTH OF BRIER. LAY EVERYTHING ON, JEPSON.



WORD WAS RELAYED TO A COMMANDO CAMP NEAR THE COAST...

THE TRIP'S ON, TOMMY. NO MOON TONIGHT. THAT'S HANDY. I'LL TAKE BRAND, HARPER AND KYLE. I WANT A FAST LAUNCH LAID ON FOR TEN. GET CRACKING!



WHERE DO I COME IN ON THIS, MIKE? MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE JOINED THE PIONEER CORPS!



THAT NIGHT, A POWERFUL LAUNCH CREPT OUT OF THE HARBOUR, THEN OPENED UP ITS THROTTLE AS IT HIT THE CHANNEL SWELL. MARTIN BRAND FELT A STRANGE EXALTATION.



IT'S A  
SIMPLE  
DUCK-IN-  
AND-OUT  
JOB, LADS.  
NO  
STOPPING.

I REMEMBER  
THE LAST TIME, SIR.  
THEY KICKED US OUT  
THEN. I HOPE I'M IN  
THERE WHEN THE BIG  
RAID COMES OFF.

AS THE LAUNCH PLOUGHED ON,  
NOEL BRAND WAITED BELOW  
THE CLIFFS WITH TWO GESTAPO  
OFFICIALS WHO WERE POSING  
AS RESISTANCE FIGHTERS.



HERE ARE THE  
PAPERS, BRAND.  
NO TRICKY BUSINESS.  
REMEMBER, I SPEAK  
ENGLISH, TOO.

WOULD I  
TAKE CHANCES  
WITH MY WIFE'S  
LIFE? DON'T  
WORRY, I'LL DO  
MY PARTY-  
PIECE!

WHILE THEY WAITED, THE TWO GESTAPO MEN GOSSIPED IN LOW VOICES. BRAND HEARD THEM—AND HIS HEART CLENCHED WITH ANGER AND DISMAY.

I SAW MORAND TODAY. HE STILL THINKS HIS TWO BROTHERS ARE ALIVE. I DIDN'T TELL HIM SEIDLER HAD THEM EXECUTED.

QUIET, YOU FOOL! YOU WANT BRAND TO HEAR?

MORAND! SO SEIDLER BROKE HIS PROMISE TO HIM!

THE EVIDENCE OF SEIDLER'S BASE DECEIT HAD DRIVEN HOME THE TRUTH TO NOEL BRAND. WITH IT WAS BORN A WAVE OF ANGER THAT FOR A TIME OVER-RODE HIS WEAKNESS WITH A BLAZING DETERMINATION.

THAT'S WHAT SEIDLER'S PROMISES MEAN! THEY'LL KILL HELOISE AND ME ONCE I'VE SERVED THEIR PURPOSE! I'M DOING ALL THIS FOR NOTHING—NOTHING!

THEN, THE SUPREME IRONY OF FATE BROUGHT THE TWO BROTHERS TOGETHER AFTER A LAPSE OF YEARS.

GOOD WORK, FOSTER. LET'S HAVE THE STUFF AND WE'LL...

WAIT! I'M NOT FOSTER—HE'S DEAD! THESE MEN ARE GESTAPO!






AS ONE PART OF MARTIN'S BRAIN REGISTERED THE SOUND OF HIS BROTHER'S VOICE, THE OTHER TRIGGERED HIM INTO ACTION.



A BURST OF CONCENTRATED FIRE SHATTERED THE NIGHT, WAKING THE ECHOES OVER THE SLEEPING TOWN OF BRIER...




WITHIN SECONDS, IT WAS OVER—  
THE GESTAPO MEN LAY DEAD...



LET'S GET OUT  
OF HERE BEFORE  
THE BALLOON GOES  
UP. WE'LL TAKE THE  
OTHER CHAP WITH US.  
I WANT TO KNOW  
WHAT ALL THIS IS  
ABOUT.

AS THE LAUNCH TURNED AND HEADED BACK FOR ENGLAND, NOEL BRAND TOLD HIS STORY WITH THE SIMPLE DIRECTNESS OF A MAN BEYOND ALL HOPE.

SO NOW YOU KNOW THE FACTS, MARTIN.  
MY WIFE AND FATHER-IN-LAW WILL BE  
SHIPPED TO GERMANY TO DIE. I'VE MADE  
A MESS OF MY LIFE AND IT'S TOO  
LATE TO  
CHANGE.



TAKE IT EASY,  
NOEL. IT TOOK  
RAW COURAGE  
TO DO WHAT  
YOU DID.



IN HIS DILEMMA, MARTIN TURNED TO HIS SUPERIOR OFFICER FOR ADVICE.



BY THIS TIME SEIDLER HAD BEEN BROUGHT THE NEWS OF THE COLLAPSE OF HIS PLANS AND NOEL BRAND'S ESCAPE. THAT NIGHT, IN THE PRISON AT BRIER...



STUNG TO IMPOTENT FURY BY DULOCCO'S SHREWD INSIGHT, SEIDLER STRUCK OUT AT THE OLD MAN...

SWINE OF A FRENCHMAN! BOTH OF YOU WILL BE TRANSPORTED TO GERMANY TO A CONCENTRATION CAMP!

HAVE COURAGE, HELOISE...

MEANWHILE, AT THE CAMP ON THE ENGLISH COAST THE COMMANDO RECONNAISSANCE PARTY WAS MAKING ITS REPORT...

IT ALL FITS IN. WE KNOW NOW THAT FOSTER IS DEAD. INTELLIGENCE HAVE JUST RECEIVED A RADIO MESSAGE FROM A MAN NAMED ROQUETON IN THE BRIER AREA. DO YOU KNOW HIM, BRAND?

HE'S HEAD OF THE RESISTANCE THERE HE ESCAPED WHEN DULOCCO WAS CAPTURED.



ONE HOUR LATER AN EMERGENCY STAFF CONFERENCE WAS CALLED AT HIGH LEVEL. WHEN IT WAS OVER...

THEN WE ARE AGREED, GENTLEMEN. TONIGHT WE MOUNT AN ATTACK ON THE GERMAN EARLY-WARNING SYSTEM AT BRIER. A DIVERSIONARY ATTACK WILL BE LAUNCHED - WHILE THE MAIN BODY GO IN FOR THE OBJECTIVE.



TELEPHONES SHRILLED, SCHEDULES WERE PLANNED AND REVISED, MEN PORED OVER MAPS. A SMALL COG IN THE VAST WAR MACHINE MESHED INTO GEAR AND STARTED TO TURN.

THIS IS IT. THE TOP BRASS WANT THE JOB DONE BEFORE JERRY HAS TIME TO STRENGTHEN HIS POSITIONS. AND THIS TIME WE'RE GOING IN STRENGTH!



ALTHOUGH NOEL BRAND'S NAME HAD BEEN CLEARED, MARTIN READ THE ANXIETY IN HIS FACE.

YOU KNOW THE COUNTRY ROUND BRIER. WE'RE TAKING YOU WITH US TONIGHT, BRAND.

THANK YOU, SIR. MY FAMILY ARE IN PRISON IN BRIER UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH. IF THEY COULD BE RELEASED...

THE CAPTAIN'S VOICE WAS REGRETFUL.

I'M SORRY, BRAND. THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO FOR THEM. THIS IS A TOP PRIORITY MISSION AND WE CAN'T AFFORD TO DIVERT OUR FORCES.

IT WAS ONE OF THE HARSH REALITIES OF WAR, BUT WATCHING HIS BROTHER, MARTIN BRAND MARVELLED AT HIS NEWLY-FOUND STRENGTH...

I'M SORRY, NOEL. WHAT WILL YOU DO?

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I'LL STAY BEHIND IN BRIER. THERE MUST BE SOMETHING I CAN DO TO HELP THEM. I'LL FIND ROQUETON AND LINK UP WITH HIM. IF I CAN'T—I'LL DO IT ALONE!



LATE THAT NIGHT, TWO LANDING CRAFT SLID OUT FROM BELOW THE HULL OF THE DARKENED ESCORT VESSEL AND CREPT WITH MUFFLED ENGINES TOWARDS THE BRITTANY COAST.



SUDDENLY THE NIGHT SKY ERUPTED IN FLAME, SHOT WITH THE DULL ROAR OF EXPLOSIONS AND FAINT FARAWAY CHATTER OF AUTOMATIC GUNS.

THAT'LL BE THE DIVERSION! LOOKS LIKE OUR LADS GOT A FUEL DUMP.



IN THE GERMAN H.Q. OUTSIDE BRIER, THE COMMANDANT FLINCHED AT THE VOICE ON THE TELEPHONE...

WHO CARES ABOUT YOUR VERDAMMT RADIO SCANNER! THE BRITISH HAVE WRECKED THREE MONTHS OIL SUPPLY AND FIRED THE AMMUNITION DUMPS! I NEED EVERY MAN! THAT'S AN ORDER!

THE ASSAULT CRAFT GROUNDED AND THE COMMANDO'S MOVED SILENTLY UP THE BEACH. SUDDENLY, A DEEP VOICE RUMBLED IN THE DARKNESS.

I WAS RIGHT, PASCAL. I TOLD YOU THEY WOULD COME.

THAT'S ROQUETON! I'D KNOW HIS VOICE ANYWHERE.





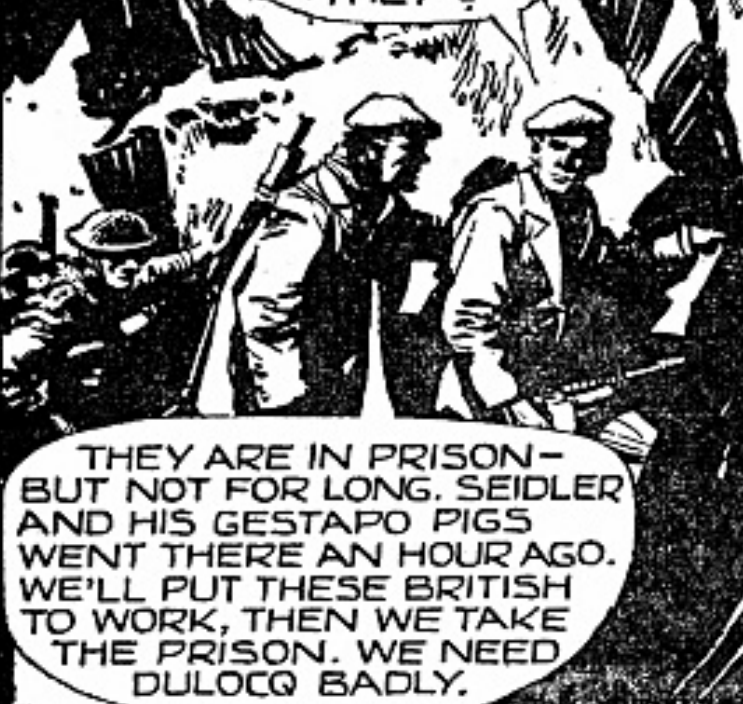
THE GREAT BULK OF THE ROCK LOOMED UP OUT OF THE SHADOWS, FOLLOWED BY A CLUSTER OF HARD-FACED RESISTANCE FIGHTERS.

I KNEW IN MY HEART THAT YOU WOULD COME BACK SOON. THE BOCHE HAVE MINED THE CLIFF-TOPS, BUT I KNOW A WAY ROUND. AFTER ME, MES BRAVES.



AS THEY MOVED STEALTHILY AMONG THE ROCKS, NOEL BRAND SPOKE BRIEFLY TO ROQUETON...

MY WIFE AND DULOCQ—WHERE ARE THEY?



THEY ARE IN PRISON—BUT NOT FOR LONG. SEIDLER AND HIS GESTAPO PIGS WENT THERE AN HOUR AGO. WE'LL PUT THESE BRITISH TO WORK, THEN WE TAKE THE PRISON. WE NEED DULOCQ BADLY.

LED BY THE RESISTANCE LEADER, THE COMMANDOS CAME OUT ON THE CLIFF BEHIND THE ENEMY POSITION.



THERE IS THE TOY YOU ARE SEEKING. DO NOT FEAR THE SEARCHLIGHT. WE ATTENDED TO IT AND ITS CREW TEN MINUTES AGO. ADIEU, MES BRAVES. BONNE CHANCE!

GOOD LUCK, ROQUETON!

THERE WAS ONLY TIME FOR MARTIN BRAND AND HIS BROTHER TO EXCHANGE A SWIFT FAREWELL.

DON'T FORGET, NOEL. WHEN ALL THIS IS OVER WE'LL MEET AGAIN. WE COULD GO BACK TO THE FARM...

NO FARMING FOR ME, MARTIN. I HAVEN'T CHANGED THAT MUCH! SOMEDAY, PERHAPS, I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN. GOODBYE, BROTHER. WE'VE A LONG WAY TO GO YET.

ONCE AGAIN BRAND FELT THE QUICK PULSE OF EXCITEMENT THAT LEAPS IN THE FIGHTING MAN ON THE EDGE OF BATTLE.

YOUR PARTY WILL TAKE THE GUARD HUT, BRAND. IF ONE SINGLE JERRY COMES OUT OF IT ON HIS OWN TWO FEET, I'LL HAVE YOU COURT-MARTIALLED!

LEAVE IT TO US, SIR!

THE BRITISH WERE POISED FOR ATTACK. THEN, AT THE SIGNAL, THEY CLOSED IN. THE NIGHT SEEMED TO BURST APART IN A TUMULT OF GUNFIRE AND SHOUTED COMMANDS.

WATCH THAT MACHINE GUN BUNKER!

DIXON, GET YOUR MEN TO WORK ON THAT SCANNER! DESTROY WHAT YOU CAN'T TAKE AWAY!



BRAND AND HIS PARTY CRASHED INTO THE GUARDROOM WITH TOMMY GUNS BLAZING, CARRYING HAVOC AND SUDDEN DEATH.



THE COMMANDOS SWEEPED THROUGH THE AREA, HAMMERING AT THE ENEMY, GIVING HIM NO CHANCE TO GATHER HIS WITS.



STARTLED OPERATORS SPUN ROUND AS THE DOORS OF THE COMMUNICATIONS ROOM BURST OPEN AND THEY FOUND THEMSELVES STARING AT THE MENACING MUZZLES OF THE TOMMY GUNS...

BACK UP AGAINST THE WALL! LEE-BRANKER-GET TO WORK ON THAT GEAR. YOU KNOW WHAT TO TAKE. WE'LL DESTROY THE REST.



SUDDENLY, IT WAS OVER. THE INVADERS GATHERED AMID THE SMOKING SHAMBLES OF THE POST.

DEMOLITION CHARGES ALL SET!

OKAY, GET BACK TO THE BOATS. SOME OF YOU GIVE DIXON'S MOB A HAND WITH THAT GEAR. MAKE IT SNAPPY!





AS THE RAIDING PARTY HEADED FOR THE BEACH, SEIDLER, IN THE GESTAPO PRISON AT BRIER, WAS PUTTING THE SCREW ON THE CAPTURED RESISTANCE LEADER.

GET THIS INTO YOUR SKULL, DULOCQ. YOUR CAUSE IS LOST. NOW I WANT THE NAME OF EVERY MAN IN YOUR SO-CALLED RESISTANCE GROUP.

THAT IS NO EASY TASK, M'SIEUR. EVERY MAN IN BRIER IS WITH US.

SUDDENLY, A HEAVY BLAST SHOOK THE PRISON TO ITS FOUNDATIONS. THE DOOR TO THE CELL SWUNG OPEN...

THE RESISTANCE! THEY'VE DYNAMITED THE WALL! THEY'RE SWARMING INSIDE!

SO! THEY WON'T FIND THEIR BELOVED LEADER ALIVE! ROEHMER, HAND ME YOUR GUN!

BUT BEFORE THE GESTAPO CHIEF COULD CARRY OUT HIS THREAT, HEAVY FOOTSTEPS POUNDED OUTSIDE. SNARLING WITH RAGE, SEIDLER GATHERED HIS MEN AND FLED—AS ROQUETON AND NOEL BRAND BURST IN.

QUICK, ROQUETON! SEIDLER! GET AFTER HIM!

HELOISE! I THOUGHT WE MIGHT BE TOO LATE.

BUT THEY WERE TOO LATE. THE RESISTANCE FIGHTERS LOOKED ON HELPLESSLY AS THE BLACK GESTAPO CAR GATHERED SPEED.

HE'S ESCAPED US. I WANTED THAT MURDERER FOR WHAT HE DID TO GASTON AND FLORIOT!

WAIT, ROQUETON! THERE'S SOMEBODY OUT THERE! IT'S MORAND!



A LITTLE MAN, SICK WITH HATE AND DESPAIR, BRANDED AS A TRAITOR TO HIS OWN PEOPLE. BUT MORAND HAD LEARNED OF THE NAZIS' PERFIDY.



DRIVERLESS AND OUT OF CONTROL THE GREAT CAR SWERVED, SCOOPED UP MORAND ON ITS SHATTERED RADIATOR, THEN HURTTLED OVER THE CLIFF TO THE BEACH A HUNDRED FEET BELOW!



THE RAIDERS GATHERED ON THE CLIFF-TOP AND STARED AT THE BLAZING WRECKAGE BELOW THEM..

MORAND WAS  
A GOOD PATRIOT  
AFTER ALL!

HE GAVE  
HIS LIFE FOR  
OUR CAUSE,  
MES AMIS!

ON THE LONELY COAST ROAD  
NOEL BRAND LOOKED OUTWARD  
ACROSS THE SEA. THE STRUGGLE  
AHEAD WOULD BE LONG AND  
WITHOUT MERCY BUT IT WOULD  
END IN VICTORY..

WHAT  
ARE YOU  
THINKING,  
NOEL?

OF MY  
BROTHER,  
HELOISE. I'VE A  
FEELING WE'LL MEET  
AGAIN SOMETIME,  
SOMEWHERE.



AND IN THE BOWS OF THE ESCORT VESSEL AS IT CLEAVED THROUGH THE DARK WATERS OF THE SEA, MARTIN BRAND ECHOED HIS BROTHER'S THOUGHTS.



SO LONG,  
NOEL. I'LL BE  
SEEING YOU. I  
DON'T KNOW  
WHERE OR WHEN -  
BUT IT'S GOT  
TO BE.

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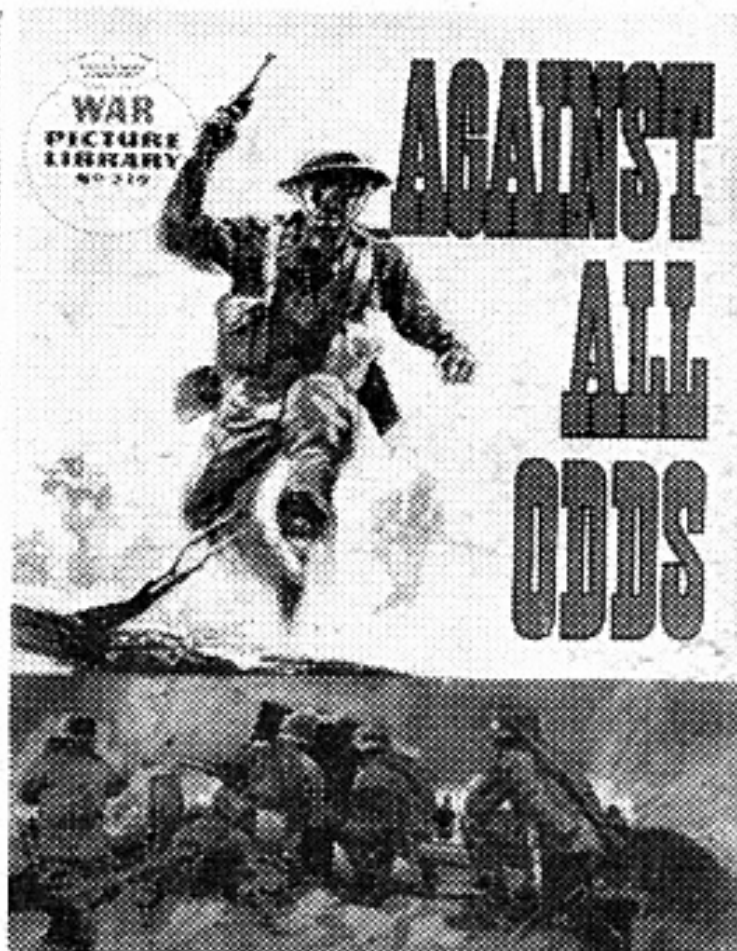
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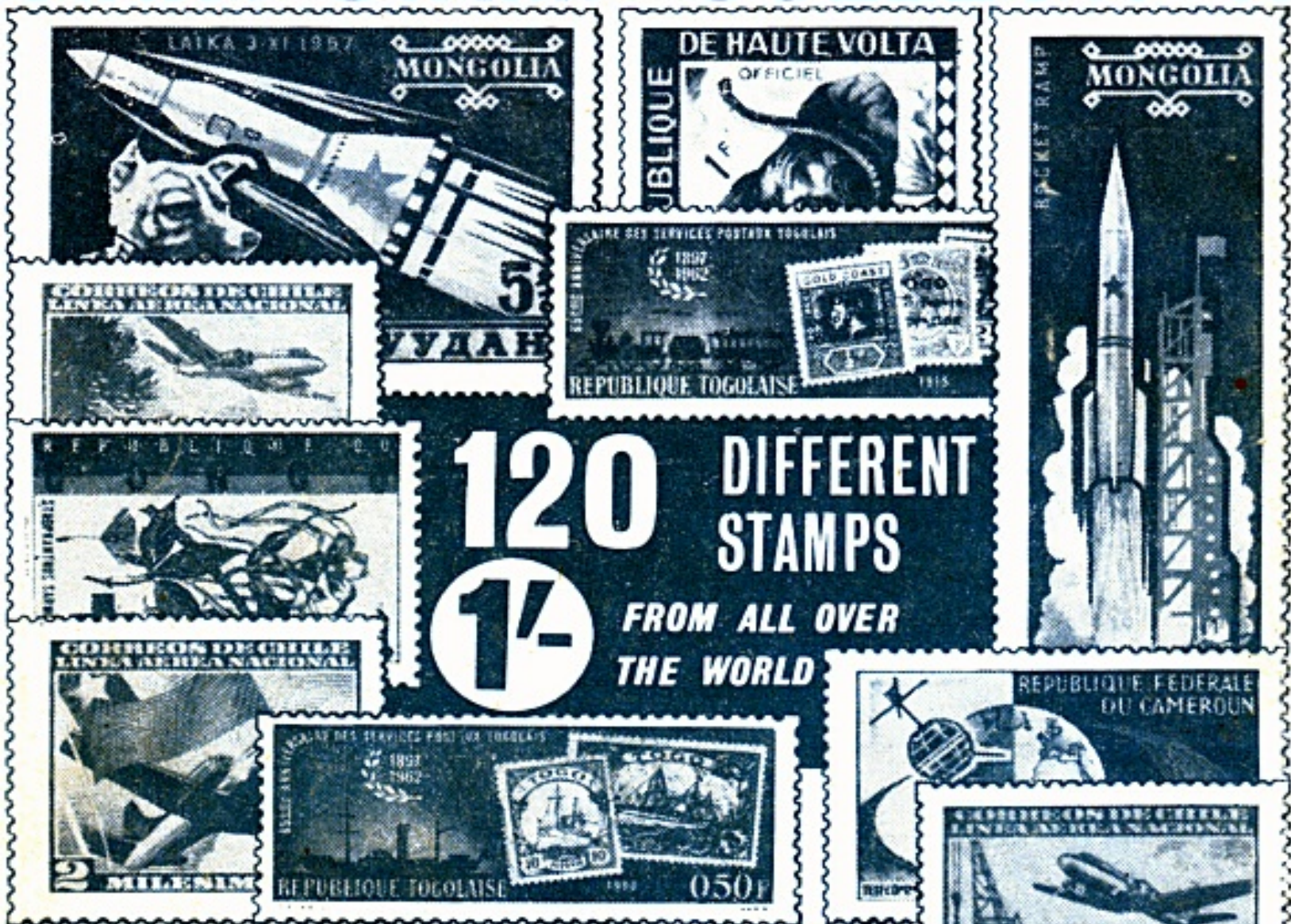
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